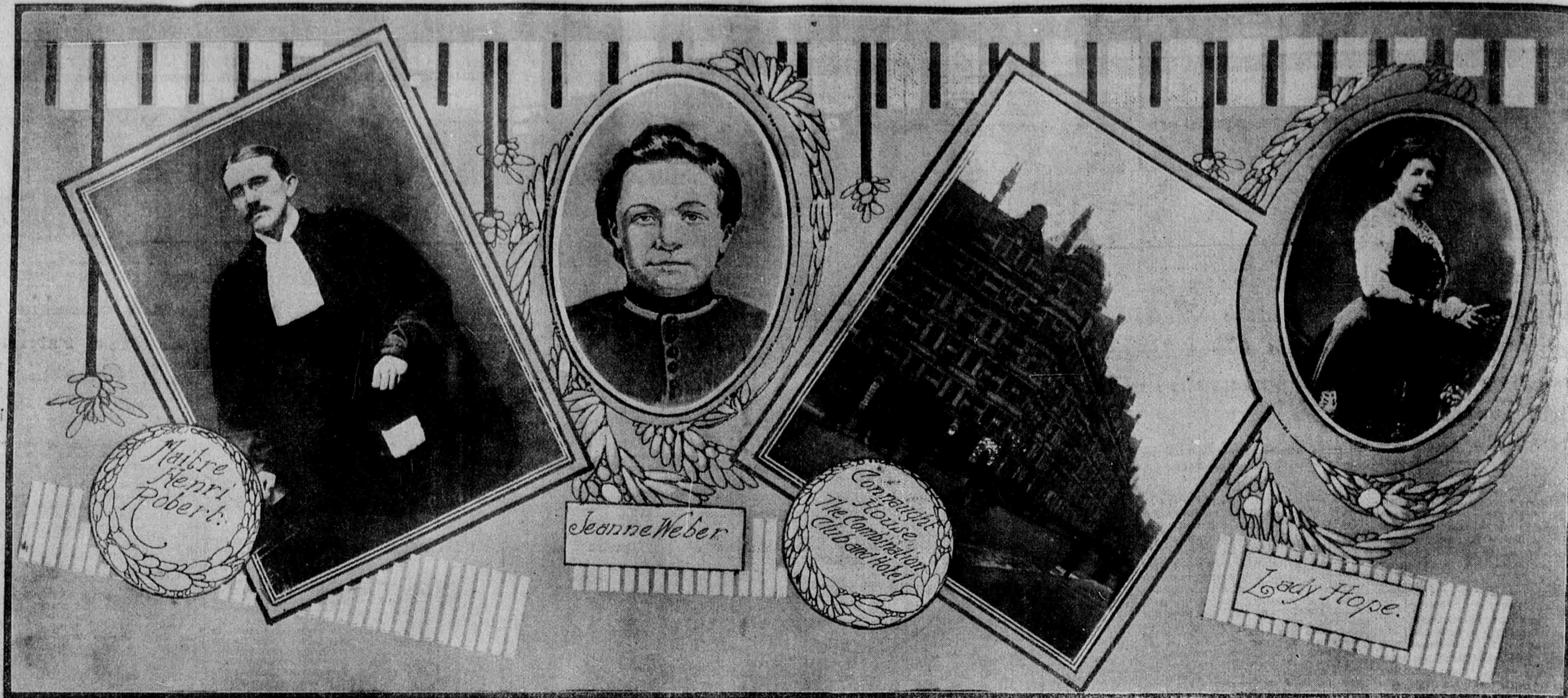


# The Saturday "News" Special Foreign Service.



## SOCIETY DAMES PLAY POLITICS

Hospitality and Smiles Dispensed  
To Strengthen Party Ties  
And Win Recruits.

## WIVES OF SOCIAL "CLIMBERS"

Ex-Empress Eugenie's Friendship for  
Sir Thomas Lipton—Exclusive London  
Gossip of the Smart Set.

Special Correspondence.

LONDON, Feb. 13.—With the opening of parliament political hostilities resume their functions of dispensing hospitality and smiles in the interests of their respective parties. Potluck politicians are far more numerous here than in America, I believe, and they play the game differently. Their motto is "Feed the beasts," the beasts being the men, of course. Bounteous repasts, served by matrons of high social distinction are found often to be more effective than masculine oratory in strengthening partisan loyalty and winning over desirable recruits.

It is a species of campaign in which the Conservatives have all the best of it. They possess an overwhelming majority in the house of lords. The wives of the hereditary legislators naturally accept the political faiths of their husbands.

American peeresses, who might be supposed to furnish exceptions to this rule, don't. They are all wedded to Conservative noblemen and are the staunchest supporters of hereditary distinctions and all the other things which differentiate a monarchy from a republic. Nearly all the crowned dames are Conservatives, and with political hostilities titles count for much. They make it easier for a Conservative to get into society with the big "g" than for a Liberal. And particularly where a man has a wife who is ambitious to meet a duchess or a countess, that consideration is not unlikely to be the determining factor in deciding what party he shall support. Even if the house of lords were abolished, or their political powers greatly curtailed, the peeresses would still count as valuable political assets.

The Liberals cannot muster a single duchess or marchioness to entertain in its behalf, while the Conservatives can count on half-a-dozen of each—and more at a pinch.

## AMERICAN MAINSTAY.

The mainstay of the government in playing the society game is an American woman, to whom I have frequently referred in this correspondence—Mrs. "Lulu" Harcourt, wife of the first commissioner of works, who is a cabinet minister. If her husband were only a lord she might accomplish a great deal more, but all that a woman can who lacks a title is to be a social success to do, she is in great form for the fray and, like the wise woman she is, she has provided herself with some wonderful frocks straight from the Rue de la Paix and new jewels from the Rue de Rivoli. I hear of a white satin princess frock cut with the still popular empire waist that sounds entrancing. Still, rather hard fabrics are again "the thing" in Paris, but Mrs. Harcourt has had the good taste to have hers trimmed with point de Venise and the buttons which adorn the bodice are of brilliant with pearl centers.

## DECIDEDLY POPULAR.

She has extraordinary popularity with her husband's party and never did a woman in so brief a time manage to get so much influence over certain members of the cabinet. She is very successful in getting appointments for her friends. It is something to her credit that she accomplishes all this by thoroughly "straight" means. One needs not to go back very far to recall the amusing manner in which a few society women managed things of the kind both with the war office and his majesty's government a few years ago. There used to be a story that a well-known countess got "places" for her following of young men from a vet-

eran general by the kisses she gave him. She used to count out most carefully to him the compensations. Small posts she repaid with five, bigger ones with 10, and really handsome ones fetched as many as 20.

With Mrs. Lulu Harcourt it is a question of the gift of the gab and a certain tenacity and determination of purpose which is bound to succeed. Besides it is her boast that she only recommends "deserving" individuals.

## RICH "CLIMBERS."

There are plenty of rich "climbers" who calmly take up a "court guide" or a "peerage" and making a list of names therefrom calmly proceed to issue invitations to their distinguished owners. Sometimes no notice is taken of the receipt of such letters; occasionally people accept, for the fun of finding out what "the show" will be like; again, hard-up peers and peeresses are sometimes very thankful to rub shoulders with rich people, however vulgar, who can give really good "spreads," and they and their hostesses become fast friends. The climber thus gets her foot on the social ladder. It is to be seen that much discretion has to be exercised in the issuing of such invitations. Evidently the rich American who sent the Duchess of Roxburghe on invitation for a dinner party possessed neither tact nor common sense and knew nothing at all of the character of her countrywomen. The duchess is now more exclusive than royalty itself. She has appropriated all the traditions of the Roxburghe family and gone one better. When the duchess received the invitation in question it was placed by her secretary in another envelope and returned with the words, "There must be some mistake."

## TRIBUTE FROM KING.

In the telegram which the king sent to Consuelo Duchess of Manchester on hearing of the death of Mrs. Yznaga, he said, "I think to your mother, more than to any other American woman, was due the success of the American woman in England. Her charm was inexpressible and her picturesqueness, especially when attended by her old negro, was delightful."

Mrs. Yznaga was really the first woman from across the Atlantic to take her own well-bred way, knew how to advertise herself. Her old negro attendant was her trump card. In the most elaborate and distinctly gaudy of her "elaborate" that the smart crowd of those days might admire her. It was said that it was this personal attendant who gave to Queen Victoria the idea of having Indian servants in her suite. Indeed in the best set in England the black servant became "the fashion" and was utilized as a butler, footman, "tiger" or page and considered eminently decorative. King Edward killed the boom when he came to the throne, as one of the first things he did was to pension off all his late mother's Indian attendants and send them home to their native land.

## SNARES FOR LIPTON.

The ex-Empress Eugenie is very fond of Sir Thomas Lipton. The story goes that she is moving heaven and earth to marry him to a certain relative of her own, but the wily baronet won't see it, a fact which is very distressing to Eugenie who has let it be known that she intends to provide very handsomely for the lady in question. Eugenie having herself a great admiration for the col., thinks that everyone else should have the same. As a matter of fact Lipton loves money only for what it can give him. Eugenie loves to be heard of. The richest grocer in England has said more than once that he has still one ambition—that it is "one day to fall in love" and he does not hesitate to take the lady's part. Lipton has said more than once that he will marry if he can, she born in the very humblest walk of life. But he is much too far seeing a man to have to let his old friend Eugenie this fact. Just now the empress is staying with him in Ceylon, where he has a palatial villa.

## LADY MARY.

The sexton of a "swell colored church" in Richmond was closing the windows one blustery Sunday morning during service when he was beckoned to the side of a young negro, the widow of a certain Thomas.

"Why is yo' shettin' dose windows, Mr. Jones?" she demanded, in a hoarse whisper. "De air in dis church is suffocatin' now."

"It's de minister's orders," replied the sexton, obstinately. "It's a cold take no chance on leavin' any o' de lanbs of de fole while dere's a big debt overhangin' dis church," said Harper's Weekly.

## Woman Accused of Six Murders, Innocent.

Strange and Tragic Story of Jeanne Weber, a Breton Peasant, Who Endured Martyrdom and was Held up to Public Execration as "The Ogress of the Goutte-d'Or" for Three Years Before She was Released from the Clutches of Law.

Special Correspondence.

PARIS, Feb. 13.—One of the most extraordinary and perplexing cases among French criminal records of recent years is assuredly that of Jeanne Weber, the meek and timid little Breton woman whom the popular voice branded with the terrible name of "The Ogress of the Goutte d'Or," and who, after three years of martyrdom, has at last been released from the clutches of justice, or, rather, of a judge d'instruction.

Apart from the intrinsic interest which attaches to every human tragedy, especially where there is an admissible element of unexplained and inexplicable mystery, this case has served to throw a disquieting spotlight on the cumbersome machine of French judicial procedure, and particularly on the medieval and inquisitorial figure, the judge d'instruction. The magistrate thus entitled is a kind of combination of judge and jury, his special mission being to "get up the criminal case" against the accused and decide whether there is prima facie evidence of guilt sufficient to send him to the assizes. As this functionary does not officiate in open court, but in his private room, he is not bound by the public eye, of course, denied admittance, and as the only "spectator" is the clerk, it is easy to see how ill the accused person may fare at the hands of the judge d'instruction if the latter be inclined to play the inquisitor. Such proves to have been Jeanne Weber's fate at the hands of M. Belleau, the judge d'instruction of Chateauroux.

## FATE DOGGED HER FOOTSTEPS.

Fate, indeed, has dogged the footsteps of poor Jeanne Weber since the month of March, 1905. She was then living with her husband in the Goutte d'Or, an industrial quarter in the north of Paris. Their life was that of the working poor, Jeanne had been a domestic servant. She was now 30 years of age and her little boy, Marcel, was just old enough to go to school. On March 2, George, her brother-in-law's little daughter, suddenly fell ill and as suddenly died. Nine days later another little niece, Susanne, died in the same sudden manner. A fortnight after that a third niece, Germaine, died, and three days later Jeanne's own little boy, Marcel, died. It was noticed that in each case—was it by a strange fatality or was it by a diabolical plan?—Jeanne was alone with the dying children. In one case the father was away at work and Jeanne sent the mother for a doctor; in another the mother was absent, and the father, hastily summoned, was sent back to his work with the assurance that the little sufferer was all right. In the third case, the child was dead when Jeanne returned home.

The whole quarrel, which had been commenting in its own rough and ready fashion on this startling series of deaths in the Weber families, now took the form of a legal case, for Jeanne was accused of being a murderess. The public prosecutor took up the case, Jeanne was arrested, and three weeks later, on April 1, she was brought before a court of law. She was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The deliberation of the jury was short, almost immediately they returned a verdict of "Not Guilty," and Jeanne Weber was free.

A murmur—it was nothing more—of applause passed through the court, it was clear that the verdict was not a popular one. I remember hearing a young workman beside me say: "It will go hard with her if they catch her alone on a dark night!"

Humbly, meekly, without a word and without a tear the little Breton woman received her acquittal and disappeared from view. The curtain descended on the "Ogress" and the affair was quickly forgotten.

Some 15 months later the child of a woodcutter named Bavouzet, in the little village of Villeval, near Chateauroux, died suddenly and in decidedly suspicious circumstances. The little one's face was convulsed and it foamed at the mouth. The village doctor apparently was unable to state the cause of death, but as there was no reason to suspect any one of a crime, the burial permit was delivered without difficulty. Only one person had been with the child in its last moments, and that was a woman who had come to the village a year before and had been installed in Bavouzet's cottage to fill the place of the woodcutter's departed wife. This woman left the cottage after the child's death and did not return till the burials were over.

## IDENTITY DISCLOSED.

All at once the news ran through the village like wildfire that the strange woman who was living in Bavouzet's cottage was none other than Jeanne Weber, the ogress of the Goutte d'Or, in disguise. The woodcutter had been an attorney reader of the reports of the Goutte d'Or mystery, and when Jeanne had been tried and acquitted, the honest peasant, touched by the woman's misfortunes and believing her to be innocent, wrote and offered her a home. The offer was accepted, the secret of Jeanne's personality being faithfully kept up to the time of the sudden and mysterious end of little Auguste Bavouzet. Now, Bavouzet's family consisted of two girls in addition to the little boy. Germaine, the elder daughter, is nearly a young woman and half-witted, and from the beginning had taken a violent dislike to Jeanne Weber. Louise, the younger, had on the contrary taken to Jeanne at once and loved her with all a child's affection for its mother. Even Jeanne's worst enemies had, it may be remarked, never attempted to disprove her kindness to children, to whom she always appeared quite devoted.

## ONCE MORE ARRESTED.

It was Germaine Bavouzet who revealed the secret of Jeanne Weber's identity to a woman in the village, by whom it was diligently repeated. Groups of gossipers collected, Jeanne's guilt was as clear as daylight to every inhabitant, the police were informed and once more the hand of fatality descended with crushing force on its hapless victim.

Drs. Audiat and Bruneau of the neighboring town of Chateauroux were directed to hold a post mortem examination on the exhumed remains of the child, Auguste Bavouzet.

## DOCTOR NOT PRESENT.

Strangely enough, the assistant who had diagnosed a commencement of strangulation in the case of Maurice was not present in court. He wrote from provinces to the judge to say that he was away on his holidays and remembered nothing about the Weber case.

Toward the close of the second day the advocate general, speaking in a court crowded to its utmost extent, said: "There were and there still are in this case strange and bewildering circumstances which defy explanation. We are living in the twentieth century. If Jeanne Weber had lived 400 years ago she would have been tried as a witch and burned at the stake."

In reading these words one is involuntarily reminded of the fate of poor Calas, the Toulouse tradesman, who was accused of poisoning his son, found guilty and broken on the wheel in 1762. The great Voltaire, convinced of Calas' innocence, should be instructed to carry out the man's rehabilitation.

10 months the accused woman lay in prison awaiting her trial at the Seine Assizes.

## TRIAL LASTED TWO DAYS.

At last, on Jan. 23, 1906, Jeanne Weber was placed in the dock. The trial lasted two days. The medical experts upon whose evidence the prisoner's fate depended—there was not a shred of direct evidence—declared it impossible to say whether the children's death was due to accident or a criminal hand. So far as they could tell after a minute investigation of the bodies there was no trace of violence.

To the judge's question whether the children's death could have been caused by suffocation, by the pressure of a hand, the experts answered no. The question whether death could have been caused by strangulation was not put, as Dr. Thoinot, who examined little Maurice Weber five days after his visit to the hospital, was unable to find the slightest trace of the alleged black line around the neck.

Finally a fourth expert stated that the viscera contained no trace of poison.

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After some hesitation they reported that death had been caused by a criminal hand. They testified to the presence of a dark line about three-quarters of an inch broad, running round the neck, but at irregular intervals; and to a second violet line running from the left temple to the middle of the right temple, such a mark as might have been caused by a bootlace. They summed up by declaring that "violence, certainly had been used on the child's neck and possibly on the heart as well."

This damning report sealed Jeanne Weber's fate. She was arrested on suspicion of being the murderer and was locked up in the prison of Chateauroux, the judge d'instruction, M. Belleau, being charged to collect evidence and report whether there was a case or not.

## EXPERTS DIFFERED.

Jeanne appealed to Maitre Henri Robert, one of the most eminent counsel of the Paris bar, who had defended her at the first trial, to watch over her interests once more and he at once promised to do so, convinced as he was of her innocence. Maitre Henri Robert's first step was to demand that the two Paris experts, Drs. Thoinot and Socquet, should be instructed to carry out an independent autopsy on the remains of Auguste Bavouzet. This was done some weeks after death. The conclusion arrived at by Drs. Thoinot and Socquet was to the effect that their colleagues of Chateauroux were not justified in their diagnosis of strangulation, and that from certain characteristic signs in the intestines there were every reason to believe that death was due to typhoid fever.

Here then were two sets of medical experts whose reports were diametrically opposed to each other, the one asserting that death was due to violent and the other to natural causes. In this dilemma, the court of Bourges, in whose jurisdiction the accused was held, decided to call in a public opinion, that of the most eminent medical authorities in France: Prof. Lande of the faculty of Bordeaux; Mariet, doyen of the faculty of Montpellier, and Briesand of the faculty of Paris. These doctors were instructed to study each in his turn, the reports and then meet together and draw up a final report thereon.

## WEARY MONTHS IN JAIL.

These must have been weary months for the wretched prisoner of Chateauroux, months of mental torture and despair. When all was over and her innocence finally established, Jeanne Weber lifted the veil of secrecy behind which she had languished and told me a heart-rending story of her sufferings.

M. Belleau, judge d'instruction, is a dithering, vacillating man, but he seems to have been dominated by two ruling ideas in this affair: The first, that Jeanne Weber was guilty, and the second, that it was his sole mission to prove her so and thus, succeeding where his colleague of Paris had failed two years previously, cover himself with glory and perhaps secure promotion in spite of advancing years.

## JUDGE'S REPORT.

"Every time I was taken from my cell to be examined by him in his room at the Palais de Justice," Jeanne told me, "I protested that I was innocent, whereupon he would retort: 'It is true, I have not the formal proof that you killed little Bavouzet, but I have the proof that you killed your own child, Marcel.'"

## WELCOME TO FREEDOM.

Before the prison gates a great crowd had collected, a part being hostile and another part friendly. Jeanne was anxious to see the "ogress" of whom such terrible things had been related. It was therefore, decided by the authorities, in order to spare her this supreme indignity, that she should be taken along an underground passage connecting the prison and the Palais de Justice and be let out from the latter building. A crowd in quick to scent a human being found a dense mass of rude men being in front of her.

## HAD ONE FRIEND.

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but I have other proofs. I have the proof that you killed other children at Paris. I have the proof that you killed your own child, Marcel."

"My son! Ah, no. Accuse me of what you will but not of the death of my dear little one. That is a calumny which was disproved at the Paris assizes, and you have no right, M. le Judge, to recall it."

"I care nothing for the Paris assizes. In my eyes you are guilty, and the court committed a grievous miscarriage of justice which I shall do my best to repair by sending you to the galleys."

"That was the judge's invariable retort. That does not matter to me. You are guilty and you shall go to the galleys."

## TOO MUCH FOR JUDGE.

When Maitre Henri Robert wrote to inform the judge d'instruction that he had undertaken Jeanne Weber's defense, M. Belleau flew into a passion and sent for the prisoner.

"What," he said, "you have dared to apply again to that man to defend you! How guilty you must feel! Why, that fact alone would suffice to convince me of your guilt. You ought not to have addressed yourself to that man. I told you I would choose you a defender myself from among the counsel of the Chateauroux bar. Well, let me tell you this much. It is not true that I told you who will prevent your being sent to the galleys. I promise you that!"

Incredible as such a state of things may seem in a country where sentimentalism is so strong as to save even the loathsome Apache of Paris from the guillotine, there appears no doubt that Judge Belleau, by a gross abuse of process of mental torture to this slow of mind peasant woman, whom each encouraging letter from her kindly counsel in Paris only plunged into a deeper abyss of torment at the hands of her tormentor. Only a few days before her release this medieval inquisitor sent for her and said:

"I have just received the experts' report. It is very long, and I have no important matters to attend to." Jeanne Weber had the courage to remark that she had been already kept in prison for eight months pending the result of the report which was to decide her fate.

## JUSTICE IN NO HURRY.

"What does that matter to me?" he is reported to have replied. "Justice holds you and will not be in a hurry to let you go. Whatever may be the conclusions of the report, even if it affirms I shall declare it to be an error, and I shall send you before the assizes where you will be condemned, you may count upon that."

But Belleau's pitiless tyranny was at last beginning to cause a public scandal. Throughout the length and breadth of the land the judge's inhuman conduct raised indignant protests. Several newspapers took up the case. It had become known that the final report of the medical experts was favorable to the prisoner. It had occupied them two months, and toward the middle of December it was handed over to M. Belleau, the pronouncement of the experts being that little Auguste Bavouzet died from natural causes. Belleau still refused to relinquish his prey.

At length the court of Bourges, galvanized to action by the force of public opinion, sent a peremptory order to the judge d'instruction at Chateauroux to release the prisoner immediately, and on the afternoon of Jan. 6 Jeanne Weber's long martyrdom ended.

Before the prison gates a great crowd had collected, a part being hostile and another part friendly. Jeanne was anxious to see the "ogress" of whom such terrible things had been related. It was therefore, decided by the authorities, in order to spare her this supreme indignity, that she should be taken along an underground passage connecting the prison and the Palais de Justice and be let out from the latter building. A crowd in quick to scent a human being found a dense mass of rude men being in front of her.

When, however, Jeanne Weber, sad and tired and with her eyes red from weeping, appeared, a wave of compassion seemed to pass miraculously over the crowd. Not a hand was lifted, not a voice raised in insult. Many of the spectators murmured, "Poor woman!"

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## TITLED WOMAN'S UNIQUE CHARITY

Tired of Running Philanthropic  
Ventures at a Loss, Lady  
Hope Builds Hotel.

## TO HOUSE TWO NOVEL CLUBS

One Composed of Men Servants and  
The Other of Clerks—Stakes  
\$250,000 on Her Idea.

Special Correspondence.

LONDON, Feb. 13.—It is an accepted axiom of modern day philanthropy that charities which pay their way accomplish the most good. London is overstocked with charities that subsist on what they can wheedle out of the public. Their promoters expend a prodigious amount of energy in begging. Keeping their money-collecting machinery going swallows up a large percentage of their income. But of self-supporting charities there is a useful lack. That alone would suffice to assure a warm welcome for Lady Hope's latest enterprise, which is the result of long personal and costly experience of philanthropic ventures that are kept alive by more or less reluctant donors.

At her own expense she has built and just opened for "business" Connaught House, a great pile of red brick buildings in the English metropolis. It affords a measure of the extent to which she possesses the courage of her convictions. To dip into one's pocket for a cold quarter of a million and to stake that comfortable fortune on one's ideas of a paying charity is certainly going it strong. Dealing in possible revenues from a charity is like trading in "coppers" on the New York stock exchange—about as life a gamble as can be imagined.

## COVERS A WIDE FIELD.

Connaught House covers a wide field. In one aspect, and probably the most important from the financial standpoint, it is a huge hotel run on the pay-for-what-you-get plan. Two hundred bedrooms have been provided and a dining room seating more than 300 people has been installed on the ground floor. On the face of it, the new hotel is like any other—out for the money—but even the cursory examination will convince anybody that there is indeed a wide difference. The rooms are let at such extraordinary low rentals and meals in the restaurant are provided at such astonishingly small prices that the obvious question is, Who is going to pay for it all? Lady Hope says it will pay for itself and something over.

## CLUB FOR SERVANTS.

The rooms of the hotel are to be occupied only by the members of the two clubs that have been formed by this energetic woman of title. First, and perhaps closest to her heart, is the Hope club, which is a development of a scheme that has long been one of Lady Hope's pet ideas. It is a club for men servants which, under the auspices of her ladyship, started the Hope club, which is a development of a scheme that has long been one of Lady Hope's pet ideas. It is a club for men servants which, under the auspices of her ladyship, started the Hope club, which is a development of a scheme that has long been one of Lady Hope's pet ideas.

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